

Remarks for Law Day, May 2011

May 2, 2011

MAY IT PLEASE THE COURT, I am Ralph Monaco, President of the Connecticut Bar Association. I would like to thank the Chief Justice for her kind invitation to me to present some brief remarks on this occasion of Law Day 2011.

On behalf of the CBA, I am delighted to be here to recognize Law Day this year, and also to extend our warmest congratulations to Attorney Emanuel Margolis for the richly deserved award that he is receiving today.

For over half a century, our nation has paused on this day to reflect on the both the importance and the privilege of the rule of law. President Dwight D. Eisenhower began this tradition on May 1, 1958, in part as a response to May Day, a celebration in many communist countries. In declaring May 1st henceforth to be known as Law Day, President Eisenhower stated: “In a very real sense, the world no longer has a choice between force and law. If civilization is to survive, it must choose the rule of law.” In 1961, the U. S. Congress passed a joint resolution, public law 87-20 declaring May 1st as the official date for celebrating Law Day.

Throughout these decades, bar associations, judicial branches and community groups have engage in activities similar to this auspicious occasion today to remind us of the importance of the rule of law. A symbol used often for law day is Lady Justice herself, courageously carrying a sword in one hand and the scales of justice in the other, and often she is blindfolded—a reminder that the law must be administered by balancing all relevant facts, sometimes through the exercise of force and power, and always blind to everything but true justice. Each Law Day we celebrate our commitment to the Rule of Law and upholding the fundamental principles enshrined in our

founding documents. We are reminded today of the powerful words of President John Adams who reflected that we are “A government of laws, not of men.”

Speaking of John Adams, this year the American Bar Association declared its Law Day theme to be “The Legacy of John Adams from Boston to Guantanamo.” This theme provides us with an opportunity to assess and celebrate the legacy of John Adams, explore the historical and contemporary role of lawyers in defending the rights of the accused, and renew our understanding of and appreciation for the fundamental principle of the Rule of Law. The CBA has embraced this theme as part of our civics education initiative that has focused on reversing the frightening trend of civics illiteracy in our society reflected by statistics that show that 2/3 of Americans cannot name the 3 branches of our national government.

Therefore, consistent with this year’s Law Day theme and in furtherance of the civics education initiative of the CBA and the Connecticut Judicial Branch, the branch and the CBA are co-sponsoring a re-enactment of the closing arguments from the Boston Massacre trials of 1770. Chief State’s Attorney Kevin Kane will argue on behalf of the “Crown” (I told Kevin that this is his opportunity to redeem the Crown’s case) and Attorney Wes Horton will argue on behalf of the accused soldiers at the Superior Court in Middletown beginning at 9 am tomorrow. Their jury will consist of the Mercy High School mock trial team, which won the high school mock trial competition this year. As many of you will recall from your knowledge of history, 8 soldiers and their captain were put on trial in Boston in 1770 for killing 5 civilians during a tense incident between colonists and these soldiers who were, at the time, an occupation army occupying the City of Boston. Already a prominent leader in the American colonial resistance to British parliamentary authority, Adams agreed to take on the cases and ably defended the accused at trial.

His role in the 1770 Boston Massacre trials has come to be seen as a lawyerly exemplar of adherence to the rule of law and defense of the rights of the accused, even in cases when lawyers represent unpopular clients and become involved in matters that generate public controversy.

And so it is appropriate for us today to salute Attorney Emanuel Margolis, who like John Adams, has not always represented the most popular in our society, but he has always sought to uphold the rule of law for all citizens whether popular or not. During Attorney Margolis' remarks 3 years ago at the Law Day ceremony in New Britain, Attorney Margolis told the audience that "The quintessence of liberty is the rule of law." He told that audience that "the rule of law refers to a system of self-government with a strong and accessible legal process." Attorney Margolis we are in your debt for your life-long commitment to the rule of law and for fighting for a strong and accessible legal process.

On behalf of the CBA, I thank you publicly for your service to our Association--for being the Chairman of the CBA Section on Human Rights and Responsibilities from 1969 to 1974, for serving as Editor-in-Chief of the Connecticut Bar Journal from 1980 to 1983, for serving as an editor of that fine academic publication for many years, and for your long service to the CBA Federal Judiciary Committee. Your service to the bar is nothing short of exemplary. Congratulations on receiving this well deserved award today.

Chief Justice Rogers, thank you for the opportunity to offer these remarks today.